

What to know about...

Lands with Wilderness Characteristics In the Planning Process

U.S. BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

The BLM Montana/Dakotas is revising four Resource Management Plans (RMP) to establish long-term direction for managing resources on public lands (See map on pg. 2).

Section 201 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) requires that resource inventories on public lands be maintained, including inventories of lands with wilderness characteristics (See pg. 2 for wilderness characteristics criteria). Wilderness characteristics inventories provide the most current resource data on BLM-managed lands, and enables the BLM to make better informed decisions at the land-use planning or project-level scale.

Like other resources addressed in the development of a land use plan, the BLM may propose a range of management actions to protect, to varying degrees, wilderness characteristics. For instance, one of the various alternatives could propose to protect areas with wilderness characteristics through restrictions on some land uses, such as surface disturbance or potential rights-of-way.

At the project level, once the RMP is complete, if an action is proposed in an area having wilderness characteristics the BLM would consider the potential impacts the action would have on those characteristics, similar to the way the BLM would assess how an action may impact an area containing cultural resources, wildlife habitat or a fluid mineral resource.



LANDS WITH WILDERNESS CHARACTERISTICS INVENTORIES

Do Not:

- ◆ Designate an area as a Wilderness Area or Study Area.
- ◆ Identify or determine management direction for these lands.

Do:

- ◆ Provide the most current resource data on BLM - managed lands.
- ◆ Comply with requirements in the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA).
 - ⇒ Section 201 of FLPMA requires the BLM to continually maintain inventory of all public land resources, including wilderness characteristics.
 - ⇒ Section 202 of FLPMA requires the BLM to rely on the most current resource inventories when developing or revising land use plans.



Use QR code to see full inventory guidance.

Lands with Wilderness Characteristics are inventoried based on four criteria:

- 1. Size.** The area must be over 5,000 acres of roadless, contiguous BLM-managed lands, or areas smaller than 5,000 acres may qualify if it is practical to preserve and use them without damaging their current condition. In addition, roadless areas less than 5,000 acres that are connecting with lands that have been 1) formally determined to have wilderness or potential wilderness values, or 2) any federal lands already managed for the protection of wilderness characteristics (e.g. Wilderness Areas or Study Areas) may also qualify.
- 2. Naturalness.** Must appear to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature and any work of human beings in the area must be substantially unnoticeable. Minor human impacts such as a water trough or fences may often be considered substantially unnoticeable.
- 3. Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive, Unconfined Recreation.** The area must offer a visitor the chance to avoid evidence of other people or provide for outstanding opportunities for primitive and an unconfined type of recreation activity like hiking, fishing, etc. Solitude or outstanding primitive recreation opportunities do not have to be available in all portions of the area. An area may possess outstanding opportunities through either the diversity of possible recreation opportunities in the area or the outstanding quality of one opportunity.
- 4. Supplemental Values.** If size, naturalness, and outstanding opportunities criteria are met, then ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical values must be considered, but are not required to qualify as lands with wilderness characteristics. See full criteria descriptions at: <http://blm.gov/6yjd>

ONGOING & FUTURE LAND USE PLANNING BOUNDARIES MONTANA/DAKOTAS

